



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Catholic school educators commit to developing students to build a better world**

Educators from one of Australia's largest Catholic school bodies have committed to helping their students and staff "seek new ways to be the inclusive, compassionate face of Christ in the world," at their five-yearly gathering in Melbourne.

Dr Wayne Tinsey, the Executive Director of Edmund Rice Education Australia, outlined some of the commitments that emerged from the three-day *Charting New Horizons* Congress that sets a broad direction for the EREA community and its partners.

EREA runs more than 50 schools across every Australian state and territory, while connecting with an international community that featured among the 250 delegates in Melbourne.

"We commit to education that helps the young to become co-creators of their world," Dr Tinsey told the Congress in his closing speech.

"Education that encourages the cultivation of an inner life and generates autonomy from the demands and promises of our dominant culture. Education that celebrates the good within our culture but also offers alternatives to all that oppresses and enslaves the human spirit.

"We commit to education that skills the young to unshackle themselves from unexamined opinions and inherited prejudices and develops capacity to question and make meaning, to contribute and live reflectively and compassionately.

"An education that encourages a life of equanimity and harmony; independent of the approval or good opinion of others. We will never be truly happy and at peace until we can live independently of the good opinion of others."

"We bring our commitment to work with and for the Church. A church described by Pope Francis as being 'of and for the poor'".

"Let us pray that the new insights that come from our Congress will inspire us to seek new ways to be that inclusive, compassionate face of Christ in our world."

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The gathering featured four Congress Animators – Senator Patrick Dodson, religious leader Father Frank Brennan, former First Lady of East Timor, Kirsty Sword Gusmao and journalist Emma Alberici.

These animators reflected on such issues as Australian reconciliation, global connections, language learning, women’s participation and leadership, inclusivity, faith formation and contemporary teaching and learning.

Dr Tinsey summarised each of their offerings as he closed the Congress, which will be used to chart a direction for EREA across the next five years.

“Kirsty implored us to prepare our young to challenge the politics of fear and selfishness which masquerades as national interest,” Dr Tinsey said.

“Kirsty implored us to challenge the young to turn the privilege they enjoy into a commitment to work for justice and a better world.

“We believe that many of our systems of education themselves need liberation ... education can be bound up by results, easily codified evidence of success, triumphalism and shallow indicators of success, making it easy fodder for those who wish to use it as a political tool.”

Congress delegates included representatives from EREA member and associate schools, EREA council, board, executive and national office teams.

Members of the Christian Brothers and other religious institutes as well as Diocesan and Catholic Education officials also attended. Delegates came from countries including Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa, USA, Canada, Italy, Ireland and India.

The EREA team will use the input from the Congress as they chart the broad direction for EREA, which is in its 11<sup>th</sup> year and oversees the education of more than 35,000 students across the country.

“We want the young to be happy. However, we want them to know that lasting happiness and inner peace arise from living in accord with purpose and from living every minute with love, grace and gratitude; lives of decency, kindness and service and authenticity consistent with their inner moral compass,” Dr Tinsey said.

EREA schools offer a Catholic education guided by the Charter for Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition.

EREA has its own canonical and civil identity but remains closely connected to the Christian Brothers and their ongoing ministry. Schools operate in dioceses with the mandate of the local Bishop.

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